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ABSTRACT

This report describes family centered employment strategies. It begins with a look at the economics of families in poverty and provides a brief outline of the many ways in which employment and training programs have begun to work with families. The report then examines the work of four employment programs now offering employment services to families: (1) a transitional employment program; (2) a refugee resettlement program; (3) a youth employment program; and (4) a faith-based program. The key elements that have enabled these programs to provide services successfully are discussed. The major federal programs used to meet the employment needs of the poor, however, remain focused principally on serving individuals. Recent Clinton administration proposals indicate that the family is beginning to occupy a more central place in the discussion of federal employment programs. Until public resources are available, it seems unlikely that many organizations will make the extraordinary effort to combine multiple revenue sources needed to serve families' employment needs successfully. An appendix describes the four programs in detail. (SLD)

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## A Report on the Family's Place in Workforce Development Initiatives

Elisabeth King and Mark Elliott

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# RELATIVE STRENGTH

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*"I found out about University Settlement...five years ago. A friend of mine told me about this agency. So my wife and I decided to come here. And now we're in their jobs program and they're helping us with resumes, daycare, lots of stuff like that...and I appreciate the many things they do for me, that they are still doing for me."*

So commented Felix, a successful graduate of University Settlement's job program. He speaks warmly of its staff: "They're like family." Because his experience was so positive, he thought other members of his family should give it a try. His nephew said, "My uncle told my mom and that same week they were both trying to take me here. My mother had to come here one afternoon so I came with her." Fortunately, the program was willing and able to help him; it had recently extended its mandate to serve a greater number of community residents and, within a month, Felix's nephew had a resume and was out on interviews.

People who have had success with jobs programs often recommend them to their families and friends. While it might seem logical for a client's spouse or partner, relative and child to benefit from a program, their participation is often not possible. Entry requirements and funding constraints can interfere with a program's ability to enroll everyone, and some programs do not necessarily want to serve family members. Staff are not always keen or even able to work with members of the same family, given the conflicts that sometimes materialize. Family troubles can be brought into the program's workplace, interfering with training, and the experience of other participants. In some cases, the program and client are just not a good match.

Nevertheless, there are strong arguments in favor of working with families—whether parents, children, siblings, grandparents, significant others or extended family members. Family members provide mutual support. Contact with several members of the same family offers staff a new lens through which to see its participants, enhancing the quality of service. Recruitment is made easier by encouraging participants to bring in family members. Perhaps most important, low-income families often need more than one wage earner to secure a decent income. By working with more than one person in a family, a program can increase the likelihood that a family escapes poverty.

Several trends have made workforce development a central element, if not the main component, of poverty alleviation efforts. First, economic changes are rewarding skilled labor. Second, poor urban and rural workers are isolated from economic opportunities that were once the mainstay of their communities. Third, the American public has become skeptical about, if not outright hostile to, income and other supports that are not tied directly to promoting work. This sentiment is most visible in the overwhelming popular support for time-limited welfare, but is also apparent in other policies related to the poor.

Workforce development programs focus on a wide range of issues related to an individual's ability to navigate the labor market, such as work attitudes, technical skills needed for certain occupations, job placement and employment retention. Success is typically defined in terms of increased wages and sustained employment of the individual, with little attention paid to the entire household. To the extent they deal with family issues, workforce programs focus on family "barriers," such as lack of child care or health care problems of other family members that are likely to limit an individual's success in the program. Very few programs have taken the next step and actually extended

their employment services to the individual's family members.

A family's composition and behavior have enormous implications for its overall well-being, as well as income. Marriage, the presence of young children, family members' physical and mental health status, substance abuse, and domestic violence all affect the likelihood that families will be able to support themselves. Therefore, workforce programs' lack of attention to participants' families limits their ability to help families out of poverty. The level of investment needed to enable a single worker to earn family supporting wages is beyond many organizations' capacity—particularly in a period when Work First strategies dominate publicly funded employment programs.

This paper is a report on family centered employment strategies. It begins with a look at the economics of families in poverty and a brief outline of the many ways in which employment and training programs have begun to work with families. The report then examines the work of four employment programs now offering employment services to families—a transitional employment program, a refugee resettlement program, a youth employment program and a faith-based program—and concludes with a discussion of the key elements that have enabled them to provide these services successfully.

## Families and the Economy

The 50 years since World War II have encompassed two distinct periods in the economic fortunes of American families. From 1947 to 1973, median family income grew rapidly from about $20,000 to $41,000 (1997 dollars), with the incomes of those at the bottom rising fastest. Then, family income stagnated, hovering at $40,000 until 1984, before rising to $45,000 by 1997 (1997 dollars). Throughout this period, inequality increased.[1] Families in the middle have held their own only because most are now depending on two salaries instead of one. In 1990, only 21 percent of all married-couple families managed on one income, compared to 61 percent in 1960.[2] In essence, in middle-income families, the increased labor force participation of women has offset the earnings losses of their husbands.

One of the key reasons for increased income inequality and persistent poverty is the growing importance of education and workplace skills. As Table 1 illustrates, only those workers with college degrees and advanced educations have been able to maintain their earnings since 1973. Those with less education, particularly high school dropouts, have seen their wages steadily erode.[3] Over this period, women's and men's earnings converged, but principally because of income declines among men rather than gains among women.

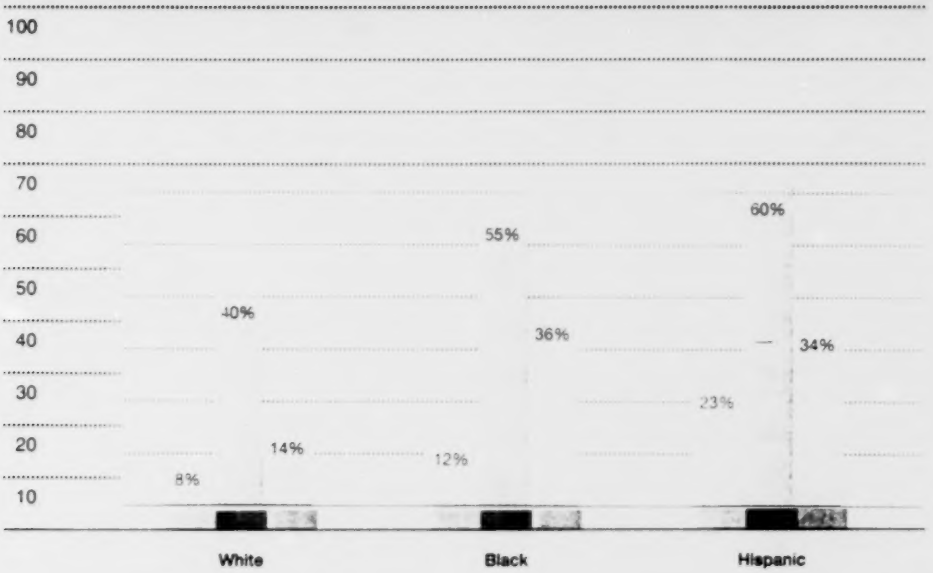
The struggle of low-income families to make ends meet has been made more difficult by the rise in single-parent households. Although single parenthood has become more prevalent throughout our society, it is disproportionately high among poor households, particularly those headed by minorities. And when children live in households headed by single, *low-skilled* adults, the chances that they will be poor are extraordinarily high. Child Trends recently reported that in 1998, 46 percent of the children in female-headed households were poor. While this number was high across all households, it was higher among minorities: 55 percent for Black families and 60 percent for Hispanic families, compared to 40 percent for White families.[4]

**Table 1**
**Change in Real Hourly Wage by Education, 1973-1995**
**(1995 dollars)**

| Year | Less Than High School | High School | Some College | College Degree | Advanced Degree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1973 | $10.65 | $12.17 | $13.45 | $17.66 | $21.52 |
| 1979 | 10.59 | 11.86 | 12.92 | 16.55 | 20.34 |
| 1989 | 8.91 | 10.79 | 12.53 | 16.98 | 22.07 |
| 1995 | 8.16 | 10.46 | 11.64 | 17.26 | 22.81 |

*Source:* Mangum, Mangum, and Sum, *A Fourth Chance at Second Chance Programs*.

## Chart 1
## Percentage of U.S. Children Under 18 in Poverty by Family Structure, Race and Hispanic Origin, 1998




Source: *Trends in the Well-Being of America's Children and Youth: 1999*, prepared by Child Trends for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

## Table 2
## Contributions to the Household Incomes of Single Women on Welfare (Total Sample=214)

| | Percent of Mothers Engaging in Strategy | Average Amount Received Monthly |
|---|---|---|
| ***Network-Based Strategies*** | ***77%*** | ***$157*** |
| Family/friends | 46 | 62 |
| Cash from men | 53 | 95 |
| Boyfriend | 29 | 56 |
| Absent father | 33 | 39 |
| Covert support | 23 | 33 |
| Formal support | 14 | 7 |

*Source*: Edin and Lein, *Making Ends Meet*

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The growth in single-parent households does not necessarily mean that these families depend solely on a single adult for income. Indeed, most poor families, including those with one parent, do have more than one potential wage earner, including spouses and partners as well as older children. As Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein documented in *Making Ends Meet*, poor women, whether working or on welfare, often rely on network-based strategies (covert and/or formal contributions by family members, friends, absent fathers and/or boyfriends) to make ends meet. The financial support they received from their networks averaged about $157 a month for women on welfare, and $253 a month for low-skilled working women.[5]

As Table 2 illustrates, over 75 percent of the women on welfare that Edin and Lein interviewed relied on network-based support. Nearly half received financial support from family and friends ($62/month) and 53 percent received support from men, including absent fathers and boyfriends ($95/month).

As shown in Table 3, low-skilled working women are even more likely than those women on welfare to rely on network-based strategies for financial support: 82 percent received support through a network-based strategy, 47 percent got financial help from family and friends ($65/month), and 61 percent relied on assistance from men ($187/month).[6]

Edin and Lein's work underlines the argument for employment programs to work with families, even when they are headed by single parents. If a program serving a single mother extends its services to her network of support, and particularly to an absent father or other family member, she may have a better chance of helping her family out of poverty.

**Table 3**
**Contributions to the Household Incomes of Single Low-Skilled Working Women (Total in Sample=165)**

| | Percent of Mothers Engaging in Strategy | Average Amount Received Monthly |
|---|---|---|
| ***Network-Based Strategies*** | **82%** | **$253** |
| Family/friends | 47 | 65 |
| Cash from men | 61 | 187 |
| Boyfriend | 27 | 60 |
| Absent father | 42 | 127 |
| Covert support | n/a | n/a |
| Formal support | n/a | n/a |

*Source:* Edin and Lein, *Making Ends Meet*

## Efforts to Provide Employment Services to Families are Few

In an effort to better understand the ways in which workforce development programs work with families, we spoke with staff at nearly 60 organizations. One of our main findings is that many programs consider themselves to be "family" employment programs because they help their individual participants, usually single mothers with children, overcome family barriers to employment. But only a small number of programs are taking the next step: intentionally enrolling more than one family member in their employment programs. This is the case for four main reasons:

1. *The structure of the workforce system is built on services to individuals, not families.* Programs focused on individual outcomes select participants most likely to complete their programs successfully. Programs that open their services to family members have to be willing to take the risk of lowering completion and placement rates. Because workforce programs are funded based on individual outcomes and are not rewarded for their work with families, no attention has traditionally been given to the employment needs of the entire family, or even to the impact of a participant's earnings on household income. For example, the most recent evaluation of the Job Training and Partnership Act (JTPA) does not include discussion of the participants' household income and composition.[7] Evaluations of welfare-to-work programs are also silent about the impact on families. Occasionally, evaluations will note the extent behavior may change among participants' children, but rarely further.[8]

2. *The focus of some funding streams is also a significant barrier to family services.* "It boils down to the categorical nature of funding," said one practitioner. Because programs are often developed for individuals based on the entry requirements set out by their funding sources, some family members may not be able to participate in a program simply because they are not eligible. The director of a program for noncustodial fathers in Milwaukee explained it this way: "Among the population of noncustodial fathers we serve, we often find that familial barriers, such as uncles, daughters, and even mothers, are part of the problem. Perhaps we could develop services for them as well, but...we don't have the funding to serve family members, just the individual with distinct problems." Programs willing to broaden their services to their participants' families need both the time and energy to spend mixing and matching funding sources to make it possible.

3. *Enrolling families in the same program is perceived as a risk.* Enrolling family members can invite family troubles into the program workplace, affecting the progress of the individuals already enrolled. When asked if she would consider enrolling the significant others of her clients, a staff worker at a Chicago welfare-to-work program replied, "Fifty-six percent of my current participants have problems with domestic violence, and another 26 percent have been victims in the past. I don't want these guys walking around the program getting in the way of

women's own participation." However, she did say that such an effort could work, as long as the men were in a different program. In addition, working with members of the same family could have a negative effect on the counseling of individual clients. Building a relationship of trust between client and counselor is a difficult challenge, requiring patience and persistence that often hinges on the individual's belief that he/she is the principal focus of that counselor. There was some concern that the participants would be less likely to open up to counseling staff if they thought what they said might be shared with a family member.

4. *Programs were either reluctant to or had never considered enrolling their clients' families.* Programs serving specific groups, such as men, women or youth were reluctant to develop a separate recruitment strategy and program for family members, because they did not want to stray too far from their program mission. The director of a welfare-to-work program in New Haven, Connecticut, for example, explained that the vast majority of its clients are single-parent heads of household. He said that the program might consider working with adult children in the household, but that it would not develop a specific strategy to do this. A staff worker at a nonprofit employment center in Missouri expressed a view often shared among those we interviewed: "We don't have things set up to serve the whole family, and I don't know that it's something that's ever been discussed."

*A lot of programs maintain their discrete identities because of their funding sources. It may very well be that in some instances one family member might be eligible while another might not be...our goal is to increase to the greatest extent possible our ability to mix and match funding so we can make as many people as possible eligible for the services we provide. It's no easy feat.*

Development Officer, Action for Boston Community Development

### Operating Approaches for Family Employment Strategies

*"Family Barrier" Programs.* The first, and certainly more common, approach takes into account such critical family issues as child care, transportation and the poor health of family members, any one of which can inhibit (or support) an *individual's* successful completion of training and retention of employment. The timing and extent of assessment and intervention vary widely from organization to organization, and seem to be most prevalent among organizations focused on the hardest-to-serve, such as long-term welfare recipients.

There are at least two major strategies of "family barrier" interventions. One strategy involves assessment of and intervention in family issues at program enrollment. Intervention may include mental health counseling, substance abuse counseling and child care. The second strategy involves turning negative family influences into positive ones by involving spouses/partners or children in program-related activities and inviting them to visit the program site.

*Direct Employment Services to Families.* The second approach seeks to assist *families* with education and employment. These programs focus on parents and their children, noncustodial fathers, and married and unmarried adults. They tend not to be found in the mainstream job training world, and are somewhat more prevalent among settlement houses and faith-based programs that have developed employment strategies as one of several ways of serving their communities. Programs offering direct services to families approach them in four principal ways:

1. **Two-Generation Programs.** These programs focus simultaneously on the education/training of the child and the training/employment of the parent, often a single mother. The premise of these programs is that working with both generations can generate a greater impact on the lives of the children and the adults. Most programs seem to be education- and literacy-oriented, with employment only one of several goals for the parent participants. Moreover, two-generation programs typically are most concerned about improving the educational achievement of the children, and see parental involvement as a key strategy for achieving that goal. We found this approach to be more common among programs working with single parents on welfare and faith-based programs working primarily with single parents.

2. **Noncustodial Father Programs.** Increased attention is being paid to noncustodial fathers for several related reasons. First, the percentage of poor people who live in female-headed households is substantial and growing. Second, the chances of them leaving poverty on their own are slim, particularly for those who have low skill levels. Third, efforts to reduce government spending across the board, and particularly for poor families, have inspired

stronger efforts to establish paternity and enforce child support orders. This perspective was evident in the allocation of welfare-to-work grants that provide grants for employment services not only to public assistance recipients but also to the noncustodial parents of children on public assistance.

The effort to establish paternity and enforce child support, *without* other supports and incentives, drives fathers further underground and away from the very outcomes our society wants: fathers who support their children's development and meet their financial needs. Noncustodial father programs have been established to improve fathers' parenting skills, increase their earnings and employment, and motivate them to declare paternity and pay child support. At least one of the programs for teen fathers that we examined had developed strategies to help their participants to improve their communication with the mother's family, which is often one of the principal barriers to a young father's connection to his child.

3. **Two-Parent Programs.** These programs provide job placement assistance and counseling to both parents in an economically disadvantaged family, whether they are married or not. They often include a parenting component and provide case management for both parents to improve the likelihood that the family gets out of poverty. These programs often target young adult or teen parents.

   In states where there is a large percentage of two-parent families on public assistance, state agencies have had to develop specific strategies for working with both parents. CalWORKS (California's welfare-to-work program) in San Mateo County has developed its own work requirements and strategy for serving the employment needs of two-parent families on public assistance. Whereas the other counties require a combined total of 35 hours of work activities for two-parent families, in San Mateo, each parent must participate in 40 hours each week. In the first quarter of fiscal year 1999, the county served 281 two-parent families.

4. **Family Friendly Initiatives.** Programs that do serve families often have only a small percentage of family members enrolled. We spoke with several practitioners who said they had served family members in the past, but had not tracked how many. These programs work with individuals and their parents, siblings or other relatives; while they do not actively recruit family members into their programs, this occurs in the course of business. We describe these programs as "family friendly" because the nature of their funding and the flexibility of program staff allow them to serve family members, but do not make it the principal focus of the program.

## The Core Elements of Family Centered Employment Programs

If there are so many risks and barriers to making a family centered approach to employment work, how do programs work with families successfully? The programs discussed below are four of the few we found that provide employment services to individuals and their families. Each of the programs is a *family friendly* initiative because, at any given time, they have members of the same family enrolled in their employment services. The programs' directors do not think their work with families is unique; what separates them from the majority of practitioners we interviewed is the fact that they do not shy away from working with families. And because these services developed organically, they demonstrate the ways in which workforce development programs may approach serving families. This section highlights the work of:

- *University Settlement House–Community JOBS Network (CJN)*, a settlement house in lower Manhattan, New York City, places community residents in transitional employment at both private and nonprofit businesses. CJN began as an effort to provide work experience to participants in its homelessness prevention and social services programs, and is now open to anyone in the community. CJN served 55 people in 1998, eight of whom have family members in the program.
- *The Jobs Partnership*, a faith-based employment program in Raleigh, North Carolina, began as a collaboration between a Raleigh businessman in need of employees and a local pastor whose church members needed jobs. The partnership eventually developed its own work-readiness curriculum, has involved over 100 area churches and businesses, and has spread to 30 other cities. The Jobs Partnership in Raleigh serves about 350 people a year. It does not track the precise number of family members it serves, but visitors to a recent workshop session observed a substantial number of couples and young children.
- *Vocational Foundation, Inc. (VFI)*, a youth employment program in New York City, offers services to families in a program that teaches parenting and job readiness to young mothers and fathers. This program evolved from a noncustodial father program into a *two-parent family program* when it added a young mother program to its services. Some program participants also take part in VFI's 15-week office skills training program and its two-year postplacement initiative called Moving Up, a national model in the workforce development field. VFI serves 100 people annually in its families programs. Like the two programs above, the percentage of families in its programs fluctuates: couples and their children comprise between 10 and 40 percent of total enrollment at different times.
- *The International Refugee Center of Oregon (IRCO)* in Portland has developed a comprehensive family approach to employment services in a refugee resettlement program. This program provides not only employment services to couples, but also to their children and even grandparents. It provides a full five years of employment services, including soft skills training, English as a Second Language, in-house manufacturing training and apprenticeship programs, and job placement assistance, to help recently arrived refugee families become and stay self-sufficient. IRCO serves over 2,000 refugees each year.

These programs clearly embody very different approaches to working with families. Despite their obvious differences, there are several core elements common to all, both in how they serve families and in why they are able to do so. Consequently, organizations interested in serving families may find them useful, regardless of the

direction from which they approach this challenge. This first set of elements focuses on the "why they can." They have:

***Program staff committed to serving families.*** Program directors willing to open their program's doors to families want staff willing to work with families and with experience doing so. Just because a program's director wants to serve families, does not mean his/her staff does. Serving families represents new challenges that many front-line staff may be wary of handling.

Staff at the four programs previously mentioned are open to serving family members and do not think of such services as inherently problematic. When asked about the challenges of serving family members, some staff were hard-pressed to come up with any. VFI's Young Mother's counselor, Lorraine Jacobs, says she has an open-door policy with respect to counseling young mothers and their significant others: "I don't worry about what it would be like if one of my young mothers would like to bring her significant other into the program. I meet with them and let them decide the level of commitment they'd like to have." If a problem does arise between a young mother and her significant other, Jacobs invites them into her office to work it out with her. "I'm not afraid to get in the middle of a conflict," she says.

The Community JOBS Network evolved from a grant to help women on public assistance find employment. The decision to broaden the program's services to the community at large was supported by the staff, who believe that if their effort is to be truly tied to the community, CJN needs to serve as many area residents as possible—participants' family members, friends and other community residents. This strategy is bolstered by staff's strong connection to participants and in-depth knowledge of their families. Says Melissa Aase, the program's director, "We were able to broaden our scope and offer services to family members because we knew we could handle it from the outset." CJN staff already had a deep understanding of participants and their families, and the participants themselves trusted staff and were pleased enough with the program's activities that they instigated the effort to bring family members into the program.

Experienced staff make all the difference. Many of IRCO's staff are former refugees and were the beneficiaries of IRCO's services. They have direct experience with the psychological and logistical adjustments necessitated by life in the United States. Most important, they have a first-hand understanding of the characteristics of refugee families from their home countries, enabling them to handle the challenge of serving these families' struggle with self-sufficiency, and to communicate clearly with families as they work through the cultural adjustment process.

***Open-door enrollment policies.*** One of the defining characteristics of all the programs is the absence of significant barriers to enrollment. The programs openly welcome almost anyone who crosses their thresholds, and even when they feel they cannot help a potential enrollee, staff provide referrals for services elsewhere. They make it clear, even to people they turn away, that the program would be willing and ready to serve them in the future. The flexibility with which these programs serve their enrollees is communicated clearly and shared from the director down to front-line staff.

University Settlement, for example, says it has funding to serve 50 community residents in its Community JOBS Network. The only entry requirement is that they live within certain geographic boundaries in lower Manhattan.

With input from church pastors, staff at the JOBS Partnership are virtually autonomous with respect to who should or should not enroll. This flexibility allows

them to open the program to almost anyone who would like to participate. The Jobs Partnership's only selection criterion is that the person be able to learn and be open to assistance. "We don't want to set anyone up to fail," says the national director, Skip Long. "They've been used to failure all their lives." This open-door policy applies to all participants and their family members.

***Multiple funding sources—a few flexible dollars go a long way.***

Even the most open program can only be as flexible as its funding sources allow. Family strategies require that staff think creatively about how to combine funding sources in order to make the program possible. Federal job training funds often are directed to populations with specific characteristics, or inadvertently steer programs away from family services by encouraging the enrollment of individuals who are most likely to complete their programs successfully. Each of the four programs we highlighted operate with multiple funding streams. Multiple, flexible sources enable them to serve multiple family members, who have different strengths, interests and needs.

VFI's Young Fathers program is funded by a $78,000 grant from the Administration for Children's Services; the Young Mother program is funded by grants from New York City's Department of Youth and Community Development and private sources, which together total $75,000. Rebecca Taylor, VFI's former Executive Director, says that the program is relatively inexpensive to run because it provides supplemental services. The training and placement piece of the program, which is not obligatory, is funded separately. The main challenge for VFI has been securing funding for fathers aged 22 to 25, because they fall outside eligibility for traditional youth JTPA dollars.

The Jobs Partnership relies almost entirely on private funding sources for its programs. The Jobs Partnership operates on an annual budget of approximately $100,000, made up of contributions from participating churches and businesses. At the moment, each participating church contributes $75 and businesses each contribute at least $150 to the ongoing work of the Partnership. Volunteers from these churches and businesses lead the majority of program activities. Up to now, it has not rigorously tracked participant outcomes. The program's permanent staff is accountable solely to its board of seven pastors and seven business leaders, and it relies on church and business volunteers for the majority of program activities. The program has recently turned to outside funding, and received a Charitable Choice grant from the state of North Carolina in Spring 1999 to buy a computerized career and skills-building system in order to offer more training and postplacement services, and to better track participant outcomes.

The University Settlement's Community JOBS Network runs on an operating budget of about $200,000 a year, funded by a variety of public and private sources. CJN receives about half of its funding from federal and state grants, including the New York State Office of Temporary Disability Assistance, and Federal Early Head Start assistance for employment services to the parents of children in University Settlement's Early Head Start program. Private sources, including corporate sponsors of participant stipends, accounts for the remainder of its total operating budget.

Not only do these four programs share characteristics enabling them to serve families, but they have also developed, quite coincidentally, similar approaches to working with families. This next section focuses on the "how to":

**Refugee Service Programs: One Familywide Approach**

Programs offering services to refugees share some similarities with traditional workforce programs. First, refugee resettlement funding is increasingly encouraging a Work First strategy. Programs serving refugee communities were, in fact, among the first to promote it. Second, though this population may present some unique challenges, the basic components of its refugee programs are those of a workforce program that provides its participants with access to decent jobs and training, and support services to help them sustain those jobs.

Where refugee programs differ is in their family oriented approach. For over 20 years, the refugee resettlement community has been working to place families in jobs for a few key reasons:

*The funding source is flexible and family focused.* Almost everyone in the refugee community with whom we spoke applauded the flexibility with which the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) funds refugee programs. Refugee programs are not as heavily regulated as are other social services. Resettlement programs have the flexibility to use ORR funding for social services and employment services, based on need. For example, because unemployment is currently so low in its area, the Metropolitan Refugee Service Program in Nashville, Tennessee, says that refugees are finding jobs fairly easily. For now, most of its funding goes to social support services. If unemployment should rise, however, the program will redirect its funding to job-search activities.

*Families come to the program from the outset.* In traditional workforce programs, intervention begins with the individual. He/she shows up at the job placement center, and the center makes a decision about whether to serve him/her. In contrast, refugee families go together to their sponsoring agency and service provider within their first few days in the United States. Case managers meet and work with the family from the first day. Refugee families are eligible for employment services for up to five years after their arrival in the United States.

*Services to refugees developed at the grassroots level.* Most organizations that serve refugees are operated by former refugees. "Refugee service providers need to be on the same page as their clients and have their interests at heart," says Ed Silverman, state coordinator of refugee services in Illinois. ORR has helped ensure that services to refugees evolve from the grassroots level by funding the development of community centers run and operated by refugees to respond to the needs of their communities. These Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs) are support centers. Some provide employment services, mental health and health services, and programs for youth, adults and seniors. ORR offers small grants targeted to the needs of specific refugee groups.

***Serve families individual by individual.***

The primary goal of most employment and training programs is to help individuals find jobs. Even those programs developing strategies for families will want to make sure their efforts do not weaken services to the individuals within that family. Because most family focused initiatives rely on individual participants to bring in other family members, they need to establish their credibility with those individuals first. And even when family members are taking part in a program, when it comes to placing people in jobs, much of the work has to be done one-on-one.

A family's willingness to take part in The Jobs Partnership, explained director Skip Long, begins with a relationship with an individual: "We have to earn the right to be trusted by the whole family, and the

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### The IRCO Model

While some programs may have time to develop a relationship with one individual and gradually broaden their services to other family members, IRCO works to place everyone immediately, to encourage the process of integration. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) reports that refugees learn English faster and have fewer social problems when they begin work soon after their arrival.

As is the standard across the refugee field, IRCO develops a "family self-sufficiency plan" at intake. Refugee families are assigned one job developer who is responsible for finding employment for every family member. Intake forms include questions about appropriate work schedules for parents, ages of children and schooling. It also includes a "self-sufficiency" wage sheet that, based on the number of adults and children in the household, calculates how much a family will need to earn in order to be self-sufficient. Job developers make every effort to place participants in jobs that pay as close to this wage as possible.

During the assessment process, the job developer interviews every adult and fills out an employability plan that includes information about job experience, interests and education, and potential barriers to employment.

*The program offers at least one additional lesson:* Job development staff find it more challenging to place the second family member than the first because secondary breadwinners often do not want to work or want one parent at home with the children at all times.

'way in' often begins by connecting to an individual and, once that connection has been made, stretching our connection to other members of the family." This is particularly true among African American families, who, Long believes, have a very strong sense of privacy. The Jobs Partnership's volunteer mentors are trained to break through the privacy barrier.

Staff at IRCO focus their attention on building the trust of the primary breadwinner or the family's "leader" first. The head of the family often has ultimate control over a family's decision to enter a program and receive services. Said a job developer, "All the different aspects and programs at IRCO are great, but they won't work unless you build a certain level of trust and respect with at least one family member. Once you've done that, people become more willing to share the details of how hard life is becoming."

***Extend services from the individual to the family.*** Once the program has established a strong relationship with one family member, it can then consider broadening services. Staff typically learn about family members' employment needs during the intake process. Becoming familiar with a participant's network can be difficult, and often depends on how willing participants are to trust staff. The relationship between the individual and program staff is key; even if staff may not be able to gather family information at first, over time a participant may be more willing to share.

Every new enrollee in the Community JOBS Network goes through an extensive intake interview, during which staff collect basic information about the participant, others in the household, and even others close to the participant. This is primarily to find out about the participants' immediate sources of support and to encourage them to think about their own support systems. "We help clients find a network of support by creating a map of who is there to help them, and we open ourselves up to helping others by getting participants to think

**Case Management**

Elements critical to any family program are its support and counseling services. In a family initiative, counseling takes place at both the family and individual level.

Each of the four organizations provides services to families in different ways. CJN assigns case managers to its participants and their families randomly and follows the participant's lead in how best to serve them. In some cases, family members share a case manager, and in others they do not. What CJN has found effective, though, is allowing case managers who work with members of the same family to share case files, so that even a case manager who does not work with everyone in the same family has access to information about that family.

Because the needs of young mothers and young fathers are so different, VFI's Services to Young Families is, in fact, two different programs, with a case manager assigned to each group. Occasionally, a set of parents participate simultaneously, but more often than not, participants bring their significant others to workshops when they feel like it. In some cases, the counselors refer significant others to VFI's regular training program, in which case they have a case manager assigned to them by that training program. And as mentioned, counselors are willing to sit down with parents and their significant others to work through problems, if the participants wish.

In The Jobs Partnership, administrative headquarters provides individuals with connections to jobs and volunteer mentors serve as counselors. Mentors work with participants one to one, but participants are encouraged to bring their family members to evening program activities.

about what community of help already surrounds them, and how to use it," said Melissa Aase, CJN's director. She also stressed the importance of distinguishing between the supportive and hindering persons in the participants' network.

***Make a long-term commitment to serving participants' families.***

As practitioners know, an individual's path to self-sufficiency is rarely smooth. The struggle to become self-sufficient requires hard work and perseverance by every individual within a family, and participants need program staff to help them stay focused on their goal. This is probably even more important when providing services to families. In fact, all the programs we visited believe that ongoing support helps a family both as it deals with the strains of poverty and makes its transition to self-sufficiency.

University Settlement's long-term goal is to help families become economically independent and stable, as well as emotionally strong. Because of the multitude of programs University Settlement offers its participants and their family members, "We have the capacity to help with the long-term development of a family, because our connection to every family member at various stages of their lives allows us to have an emotional, educational and strength-enhancing impact on the next generation," says CJN's director. Program participants are encouraged to take part in the lifelong services the settlement house offers.

Kenneth McClennon, VFI's Young Fathers Program counselor says, "The young participant's personal concept is short-sighted and self-limiting." Many of the fathers come to VFI and think establishing paternity and paying child support is the fastest connection to their children, and so they want a job as quickly as possible. But Mr. McClennon encourages them to look further ahead and consider a training program that might lead to a higher salary and a long-term career. Many Young Fathers Program participants have gone through VFI's regular training program, and come back for services as fathers, or vice versa." One father had learned of the Young Father's Program when he was a participant in VFI's regular training

program five years earlier. He took it upon himself to get in touch with the Young Father's counselor because he wanted to be a better parent and knew that VFI would be open to helping him.

Maintaining close contact with program participants throughout their lives has another benefit: the program is more likely to draw in other family members later on. IRCO provides job placement and training services to refugees for five years after their arrival in the United States, and its community service centers cater to the needs of refugee families throughout their lives. During their first 12 months in the United States, refugees take part in what IRCO calls its Newly Arrived Employment Services. Refugees can come back to IRCO and participate in its Established Employment Services (EES) at any time during their next four years in Portland. Staff say that EES is a popular choice among secondary breadwinners, who initially do not want to work but change their minds later. IRCO ensures the family's smooth transition to self-sufficiency by keeping its doors open, responding to crises and new found interests in employment as they arise. "Sometimes participants decide they don't want to work, but after they see their neighbors and other community members with two incomes, they realize that they, too, may need to go to work," says Victoria Libov, IRCO's employment services coordinator.

The Jobs Partnership keeps the program participant relationship going on several fronts. Successful completion of The Jobs Partnership "Personal and Professional Keys to Success" course requires participants to commit to a lifetime of change. Participants are assigned mentors who help their mentees ("neighbors" in the Partnership's parlance) over the hurdles to success and stay with them for at least two years after program graduation. Many of the mentors consider their role a lifetime undertaking. "I just couldn't walk with someone for a year and let them go," said one. And, of course, a family's lifetime membership in a church automatically ties them to the program. Once participants are on the job for six months, they come back to take part in the 12-week "Keys to Financial Freedom" curriculum, which family members are invited to attend. Courses, led by business and community leaders, include balancing work and family life, household budgeting and saving, and encouraging home ownership. The courses are also a way to keep participants surrounded by the teachings of the Partnership and the church, and to engage entire families in long-term self-sufficiency efforts.

***Offer services or referrals to meet the diverse needs of families, including the children.***

Because family members have many different needs, programs serving families should offer (if possible)—or at least have direct connections to—a range of services for adults, children and seniors, i.e., counseling services, after-school programs for children and child care. Offering a variety of services gives a program a number of ways to connect to a family, increasing the likelihood that other family members will enroll. Organizations may wish to partner with other agencies to access the services they cannot provide.

IRCO seeks to ease the transition of every member of a refugee family into life in the United States, as part of its mission to ensure the long-term self-sufficiency of that family. As Victoria Libov, the program's employment services coordinator says, "We provide our clients with wrap-around services, because our mission is family self-sufficiency." IRCO offers every adult who is able to work classes in the English language, basic workplace skills and job placement services. A staff member is on hand to help newly arrived parents find good child care, transportation and clothing, and learn about proper nutrition. IRCO has an Asian Family Center, open to all refugee families and offering a variety of after-school, weekend and summer programs for refugee children.

The Community JOBS Network is one of many programs that University Settlement provides. They include Head Start and Early Head Start programs for the very young, a summer camp for children aged 6 to12, after-school tutoring for teens, ESL and literacy classes for adults, and home visits to community seniors. When asked about the benefit of having her entire family involved, one CJN participant explained, "It makes it easier because you know who you're dealing with...my son, he's right now with the program as we speak...they help him out a lot, they keep him occupied mentally, you know, they try to do different activities with them and show them responsible things."

VFI does not provide child care on site, but it does offer referrals for child care. Participants who cannot find child care during evening program activities are encouraged to bring their children to the program, and the children sit in the classes with the parents. Having the children along is a plus for the program's counselors, because it helps them see how the parents and children interact. VFI also provides special parenting classes two nights a week.

The Jobs Partnership also invites participants to bring their children to evening activities, and offers child care and tutoring to older children off site.

## Conclusion

The need to support American families has been a central tenet of recent political campaigns and legislative proposals. Indeed, Republican and Democratic officials have been engaged in a long debate about which party is more "family friendly." And political rhetoric aside, many programs to aid the poor emphasize the need to help low-income families move out of poverty or become self-sufficient, including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and Food Stamps.

The major federal programs used to meet the employment needs of the poor, however, remain focused principally on serving individuals. Job training programs in particular come with restrictions that make it difficult to serve whole families. Funds often target populations with specific characteristics, which prevent programs from broadening services to other family members. Moreover, the performance measures that accompany these funds emphasize individual outcomes. If the old axiom "what's measured is what gets done" is true, it is clear why so few employment programs focus on families.

Recent Clinton administration proposals, including the Responsible Fatherhood Initiative and the Fathers Work/Families Win program, indicate that the family unit is beginning to occupy a more central place in the discussion of federal employment programs. Whether these initiatives will spur organizations to serve their participants' family members is unclear. An important opportunity to highlight the role of the family in employment policy will occur during TANF reauthorization in 2002. In the meantime, state and local officials interested in supporting employment programs for families could consider using unspent TANF funds to invest in such strategies.

Until public resources are available, it seems unlikely that many organizations will make the extraordinary effort required to combine multiple revenue sources needed to serve families' employment needs effectively. If public employment policy changes, we believe that groups will surface eager to pursue such strategies. Organizations deeply rooted in particular communities, whether they are defined by ethnicity, religion or geographic boundaries, are among the likely candidates, since they typically focus on families. Others, of course, will not want to serve families; they are committed to serving particular individuals or have specialized employment strategies that make such approaches difficult. In the end, a mix of programs seems appropriate.

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6 Ibid.

7 Refers to *Does Training for the Disadvantaged Work? Evidence from the National JTPA Study* by Larry Orr et al. The Urban Institute Press. Washington, D.C. 1996. The book does include an analysis of the impact on AFDC and Food Stamp benefits when participants gain employment.

8 Paul Osterman's evaluation of Project QUEST notes the positive impact on the children of participants in its job training programs. MDRC's recent evaluation of Project New Hope also focuses on the positive experiences of the children of program participants.

9 VFI's employment and training program, called Moving Up, includes 22 weeks of training followed by two years of post-placement services. For further information, see *Getting in, Staying on, Moving Up: A Practitioner's Approach to Employment Retention* by Tony Proscio and Mark Elliott. Public/Private Ventures, Winter 1999.

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# Appendix

## International Refugee Center of Oregon (IRCO)

*Portland, Oregon*

A community-based organization providing employment services to refugee families for up to five years after their arrival in the United States. IRCO offers families both employment and support services to ensure that they embark and stay on a path to permanent self-sufficiency. The program helps approximately 1,200 refugees find jobs in the Portland area each year.

**Key Features**

- Family case management to ensure the whole family is involved in the adjustment process.
- A variety of employment services from soft skills training and job placement assistance to long-term career planning for all adults (age 18 to 64) in the family.
- Access to short-term, flexible federal grants for programs targeted to specific refugee groups.

**The Program**

*Work First-Oriented Placement Strategy.* When a refugee family arrives in Portland, the sponsoring agency will immediately refer the adults to IRCO for employment assistance. Once at IRCO, all adults in the household who are eligible to work go through an assessment process with the job developer. The job developer sets up a family case file, and an individual employment plan is worked out for each family member. The job developer also works with the whole family to overcome potential barriers to employment such as child care, medical care and transportation.

Every adult who is eligible to work enrolls in a four- to seven-week Job in English training program, which provides 4.5 hours a day of workplace English classes, interview techniques, workplace behavior, and other soft skills training. During the job training phase, job developers work to find jobs for each family member. Their attention, however, is focused on getting a family's primary breadwinner the highest-paying job possible to allow his family to become self-sufficient quickly. Placed participants receive 90 days of retention services including two on-site visits with the employer and client, and both receive follow-up calls during the first week, first month and after 90 days at work.

*Vocational Training.* Participants who have trouble finding work with good wages may come back to IRCO for assistance in vocational training. IRCO offers a 30-day "power sewing" program that teaches refugees to use industrial sewing equipment, and a 30-day "pre-industrial training" program that teaches basic metal- and woodworking techniques. IRCO also has funding to connect refugees to short-term vocational programs at the local community college. While IRCO's short-term employment services generally focus on a family's father, program workers have found that women and adult children sometimes come back to IRCO for these vocational programs several years after the family's arrival.

*Special Programming.* The Office of Refugee Resettlement offers two-year grants for discretionary funding of programs that serve the needs of specific refugee populations, and IRCO has applied several times for funding of programs that work specifically toward long-term family self-sufficiency. IRCO created a "secondary wage earner" program that caters to the unique skill deficits of secondary wage earners, who are unlikely to have had work experience in their home countries.

**Funding**

IRCO operates on an annual budget of $3.8 million. Seventy percent comes from government agencies, including the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), and state and local dollars targeted to employment assistance and citizenship services for refugees. IRCO also earns money from its in-house translation service.

## The Jobs Partnership

*Raleigh, North Carolina*

A collaboration of over 100 churches and businesses working to help the community's needy through spiritual guidance, basic skills training and job placement services. The Jobs Partnership is the result of a collaboration between a Raleigh businessman who needed to find good construction and maintenance workers for his company, and a pastor whose church had several unemployed members in need of work. Today, seven communities in North Carolina and 30 cities across the country have developed Jobs Partnerships based on the Raleigh model. In the past three years, the Raleigh site has served 350 people and boasts a retention rate of 93 percent.

**Key Features**

- A training curriculum that emphasizes job and life skills and that is rooted in Biblical teachings about the value of work.
- 24-hour mentoring services for individuals and their families.
- Active and equal participation of both churches and businesses to ensure an effective, balanced approach to employment services.

**The Program**

*A curriculum that encourages personal responsibility through spiritual growth.* Churches and businesses worked together to create the "Keys to Professional and Personal Success" learning curriculum, a 12-week program that includes workshops on practical workplace skills, spiritual growth, and strengthening personal and professional relationships. Participants are recruited by their local churches and are expected to attend the Keys to Success program two nights a week for all 12 weeks. Even though the Partnership places participants in jobs at any time during their participation in Keys to Success, staff only place those whom they feel are ready to work and will stay on the job. Participants start at an average wage of $6.50/hour, and after a year on the same job earn an average of $10.50/hour.

*Businesses provide jobs, and churches provide support.* Local businesses provide financial support and a network of contacts for job placement opportunities in the community. Participating businesses register requests for employees with The Jobs Partnership Clearing House, which, in turn, matches program participants with the best jobs possible. A few businesses choose to attend Keys to Success sessions and often select potential employees during these meetings. Participating employers assign workplace mentors to their new employees. For the participating churches, The Jobs Partnership provides a vehicle for ministry and a unique opportunity to bring churches of different denominations together to better serve the community. Participants from each church are assigned a mentor or group of mentors from their congregation, who provide support and advice not only to them but also to members of their family.

Once a participant has been on the job for six months, he/she is invited to attend "Keys to Financial Freedom," a 12-week curriculum about time management, budgeting, and balancing work and family life. Church volunteers have found that for many couples this session is the most difficult to manage, because couples are not always open with each other about financial matters. The opportunity for couples to confront such issues has had positive outcomes.

**Funding**

The Jobs Partnership in Raleigh operated on a budget of $100,000 in 1998. Its financial support is divided almost evenly between local churches, businesses, and personal and private foundation donations. The Partnership in Raleigh was recently awarded state support through Charitable Choice.

## University Settlement House
## Project Home–Community JOBS Network (CJN)

*New York, New York*

A community settlement house with a job placement program providing subsidized transitional employment, job placement and job retention services for working poor and TANF families of the Lower East Side. University Settlement asks all enrollees in CJN to list all family members at enrollment and encourages participants to introduce them to the program. The project served 55 people in 1998, eight of whom had or have had a family member in the program.

**Key Features**

- Assessment and support services for the individual and his/her family members from intake.
- Comprehensive family case management approach that allows for individual, confidential counseling if necessary.
- No clear entry or exit for program participation and access to a variety of programs throughout the settlement house.

**The Program**

*Transitional, Subsidized Employment.* University Settlement's CJN provides basic skills training, job experience through internships in a variety of nonprofit and corporate settings, and ongoing support to help participants stay on the job and secure permanent employment. Participants are usually placed in internships of about 10 to 20 hours a week for three to six months before beginning a search for full-time employment. Throughout their internships, participants have access to job search and resume assistance, job readiness workshops, referrals for interviews and access to computers, fax and phones. Recent internships have led to full-time jobs as administrative assistants, health aids, security guards and legal secretaries with annual salaries ranging from $18,000 to $29,000 a year, and hourly wage jobs between $5.50 and $13 an hour.

*Family and Individual Case Management.* When participants enter CJN, they are assigned a case manager, who immediately puts them through an assessment designed to assess their employment experience, educational background, family history and potential barriers to employment. During this process, case managers ask if there are any family members who might be interested in receiving employment services. While participants are not required to bring them in for services, they are encouraged to do so.

Case management for members of the same family depends on what the families themselves want. Case managers set up a family service strategy for family members who share the same household, but will also meet with individuals confidentially at intake to make sure that such issues as domestic violence or substance abuse are treated with sensitivity. Family members who do not live together are often assigned to different case managers for reasons of confidentiality, but case managers have found it effective to share information from each others' files, because often "what's going on in one family might bear directly on the other."

**Funding**

In 2000, CJN will serve about 75 participants at a cost of about $3,000 per participant. Most of its government funding goes toward categorical services such as case management and homelessness prevention services for families and individuals, which can include employment activities. CJN relies on flexible, private dollars to serve adults who do not meet the eligibility requirements of certain funding streams.

## Vocational Foundation, Inc. (VFI)
## Services to Young Families Program
*New York, New York*

A community-based job training and placement program targeting disadvantaged youth. VFI's Services to Young Families Program serves the employment needs of parenting or expectant young mothers and fathers, and works to foster interaction between them to improve their children's chances of a better life. VFI serves over 1,000 youth a year, and about 55 fathers and 45 mothers in its family support initiative.

**Key Features**

- Weekly meetings with mothers and fathers to encourage communication and good parenting skills.
- A focus on employment for fathers, in particular, to enable them to contribute to the financial well-being of their children.
- On-site meetings with a nurse to discuss pregnancy prevention and receive contraceptives.

**The Program**

*Employment Services for Young Fathers.* VFI's family initiative began in 1985 with the creation of the Young Father's Program. Targeted to fathers aged 16 to 24, the program was developed to encourage young fathers to provide both financial and emotional support to their children. Since many single fathers need work immediately in order to support their children, VFI emphasizes job placement. In some cases, participants forgo the five-month job training program for immediate job placement. For expectant fathers, the job training program is balanced with parenting preparation courses and counseling. At enrollment, young fathers are required to fill out a Case Plan Agreement, which lays out their commitment to job placement, parenting classes and making child support payments. Counselors work with fathers to set up informal child support arrangements until they earn enough to enter the court system. All participants must complete two two-hour parenting workshops before their first job referral.

*Parenting and Job Training Classes for Mothers.* Because many program participants are new or expectant mothers, VFI's program for young mothers shifts the focus away from immediate job placement and toward GED preparation and parenting skills. Mothers learn proper child care and child development techniques in classes with counselors and nurses. When ready, they may enroll in VFI's regular job training and placement program.

*Family Counseling Services.* The key element of this initiative is bringing parents together in the variety of counseling services VFI offers. Fathers and mothers meet separately two evenings a week with counselors to discuss family and support issues and to work through problems in their relationship. Parents also meet together with their children for play and development and attend workshops on preparation for parenthood and childhood development. An on-site nurse meets with both parents to discuss birth control (VFI distributes contraceptives, which can be prohibitively expensive for low-income women). The nurse also provides clothing, information about housing assistance and child care, and even toys for the children. VFI boasts remarkable outcomes in reducing birth rates among first-time mothers: 95 percent of its program participants do not have a second child during their participation in VFI's programs.

**Funding**

VFI operates on a budget of about $3 million a year, with about 66 percent of its funding from public sources and 33 percent from private foundations and individual donations. The Services to Young Families Program operates on a budget of about $75,000 a year, with separate funding streams for men and women.

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